

HAMNET BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY 1 JUNE 2003

HAMNET is the Official Emergency Communications wing of the South African Radio League and is responsible for providing emergency communication in times of distress or national disasters to local and regional authorities, when requested to do so.

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IN THE BULLETIN TODAY:-

BULLETINS AROUND THE COUNTRY RESIGNATION FEEDBACK HARRISMITH DISASTER MANAGEMENT MEETING AROUND THE WORLD - EVENTS AND DISASTERS NEW COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT DATES TO REMEMBER

HAMNET BULLETINS AROUND THE COUNTRY

KZN - Sunday morning at 07H00 on their local VHF repeaters with a relay on 7.070MHz

National Bulletin at 17H00 local on 10,130Mhz in the 30M band with a relay on 7.070Mhz

North West Province have a club bulletin on Mondays, which includes a Hamnet segment at 19H00 local on 3,750Mhz in the 80M band as well as their local repeater on 145.737.5Mhz.

Gauteng North on Tuesdays at 20:30. The frequencies are 145,725MHz and either on 7,070MHz in the 40M band or 3,695MHz in the 80M band. There is a possibility that their bulletin times may change in due course but you will be advised.

Hamnet Western Cape Province with a bulletin on Wednesdays at 20H30 local on 145:700MHz, relayed on 3,674MHz.

The HAMNET Bulletin is e-mailed to all those of whom I have address and also sent out on packet by Rudi, ZS6DX.

RESIGNATION FEEDBACK

Firstly, my humble thank you to the avalanche of e-mails I received after I felt I needed to test the water regarding my role as not only Hamnet Director but also as Councillor responsible for the running of the N.A.R.C. office, Minute Secretary and also the problem we are having with the QSL Bureau.

Some of the e-mails were very straight and to the point but others also thanked me for not only the work I am doing for Hamnet but also my commitment to Amateur Radio.

Needless to say, we will carry on as usual, maintain and improve on, not only the service to Hamnet members but also to League members in general.

Once again, thank you for the support.

HARRISMITH DISASTER MANAGEMENT MEETING - N3 FREEWAY

On Wednesday morning, I was rather early out of the feathers to attend a meeting of the N3 Incident Management team at the top of van Reenen Pass. Jannie ZS4JR invited me, to underline to the various Role Players, the benefit that Amateur Radio can play in any disaster situation, especially when there is a total blackout of electrical power and the end result, no normal communication.

This has been the case during the last few years when heavy snowstorms have hit the area and as you recall, on many occasions, van Reenen and Oliviershoek Passes being impassable for days on end.

In attendance were a host of high officials covering every aspect of people who would be involved in a major disaster. Traffic Departments, SANDF, SAPD, Various Disaster Management Officials, Breakdown Associations, Provincial Administrations, MTN, Vodacom and Cel C, Emergency Medical Services, Telkom, The Weather Bureau, and so the list goes on. In total approx 60 people.

What struck me was the importance of the N3. In fact Gideon Cloete, of N3 Toll Concession (Pty) Ltd, indicated that the N3 is the lifeline of the country and when van Reenen is closed, it affects the economy of the whole country.

Some of the speakers gave very interesting presentations. The officials from the Weather Bureau (Durban & Bloemfontein) explained to us the weather patterns needed to correctly forecast snow and other untoward weather conditions. Their site is available at www.weathersa.co.za or on 082 162. By arrangement, they will SMS certain authorities in times of them suspecting strange or untoward weather patterns, in order to give them adequate warning.

Charles Carey, Head of Disaster Management in Kwa-Zulu Natal, briefly discussed the newly published Disaster Management Bill and specifically pointed out the 3 levels of Management in a disaster situation. Starting from Local Municipal to Provincial and eventually to National. National comes in to play when Provincial borders are crossed in any specific disaster situation.

He also emphasized the importance of Amateur Radio, quoting specifically the Y2K scenario when the Hamnet Amateur Radio fraternity in the whole of South Africa were on standby to provide emergency communication.

He had a few harsh words to say about reckless 4x4 drivers who, when there have been good snowfalls, merely crush and flatten farm fences to gain access to the snowfields for enjoyment. Totally disregarding the consequences after they have had their fun.

Various role players gave presentations on their specific tasks in any disaster situation. The need for 4x4 vehicles in snow conditions was emphasized but even 4x4 vehicles are useless unless the wheels are fitted with chains. The necessity to correctly and adequately equip at least one of these vehicles was highlighted. Blankets, medical equipment, basic foodstuffs and smoke flares for helicopter evacuation in case of injury.

All JOC's should be fully equipped to handle any situation. Each role player should be fully equipped to handle his specific task and that the Multi Disciplinary Approach is essential.

Both the cell phone representatives made a very interesting point. A situation does exist where a cell phone can be used without a sim card. It will dial any genuine emergency number without a sim card. Please don't try this, you are just going to upset various help facilities but be aware that it is possible.

Another situation that gave Ladysmith a problem during the last blockage on van Reenen, was the large contingent of trucks and their drivers who descended on their town with no place to park their vehicles and also no place to sleep.

A contingency plan is now in place. Should this happen again, a parking area for the trucks has been prepared and accommodation for the drivers has been taken care of. Learning by experience is an excellent teacher.

There also exists a need for a specific person to be appointed who can deal with the Media. So often, variations on a situation can create the wrong message going out to the public. Also there is a problem of people who will use any trick in the book to be allowed through roadblocks.

During my presentation I gave a short history of our involvement in earlier disasters around the country. I also emphasized that Amateur Radio does not need power, cell phones or telephones. We can operate independently of all other means of communication. Amateur Radio is self-sufficient.

I also explained that all the role players are using different frequencies, which creates a problem of correct and adequate communication. We are developing a patch facility or Single Frequency Unit that can eliminate the task of taking messages and sometimes sending out incorrect information.

All in all, a very interesting morning and I am very glad that I was invited.

AROUND THE WORLD - EVENTS AND DISASTERS

Algerian Earthquake

At the time of going to press, the death toll has already exceeded the 2200 mark, more than 7000 have been injured and it is not known how many are still trapped under rubble. The earthquake struck during suppertime when most people were indoors and registered 6.8 on the Richter scale.

Search & rescue teams have been despatched to Algeria from all over the world, including a team from South Africa with sniffer dogs to assist in the rescue effort.

Countries from where teams were sent included Japan, Denmark, France, Spain, USA, Poland, Belgium, Norway, China, Russia, Portugal and South Africa.

To make matters worse, the country, even at this time, is still being shaken by aftershocks, but fortunately not as severe as the initial quake.

We will keep an eye on developments in Algeria but at this stage are not aware of any Amateur Radio operators lending a helping hand there. I assume that the language would be a problem unless you are capable of French among others.

NEW COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT

After the meeting on Wednesday, I approached Jannie Minnie ZS4JR of Harri-smith, to become a member of the Hamnet steering committee.

I am happy to say that Jannie accepted and has been appointed as Technical Advisor.

After all the questions and approaches we had from some of the Disaster Management members regarding location of radio equipment and technical advice, I deemed it necessary to get Jannie involved.

Jannie comes to us with a tremendous amount of technical experience, insight and knowledge in the communication field.

It would have been a serious oversight not to ask Jannie to join the Hamnet Committee.

Thank you Jannie and welcome to the team.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Two dates come to mind. On the 7th of June, the KZN Hamnet Group are setting up a station at the Queensburgh Methodist Church Fete to promote Hamnet and Amateur Radio.

The major event of the month will again be the Comrades Marathon that will be run from Durban to Pietermaritzburg on Monday the 16th of June. After a bit of a hiccup, Hamnet finally secured the opportunity to again do the communication for this International event.

That is all for today.

Bulletin ends.